

CARE FUNCTIONAL REVIEW HUMAN RESOURCES

For information on interpretation or clarification of the functional questions, please call the contact person whose name and phone number is shown next to each section.

4.01 Employment (Sue Hamilton, 301-504-1398)

- Verify the Location's procedures for receipt of applications. All applications should be either date-stamped or the date of receipt of the application should be notated in ink.

Applications for permanent employment (competitive service): These applications must either be forwarded immediately to the servicing Branch, HRD, for response or the Location must return the application by letter informing the applicant to apply for permanent positions in response to specific vacancy announcements. These vacancies are advertised on the OPM and HRD Web sites. Verify that the Location does not retain any applications for permanent employment.

Applications for L/A and Student Positions (excepted service positions): If the LAO has delegated employment authority, applications for L/A and student positions (nonpermanent positions in the excepted service) may be circulated. Verify that the Location does not keep applications on file and gives "veterans preference," if applicable, to applicants.

Applications for Postdoctoral positions (excepted service positions): may be submitted to the scientist who is the mentor for the position and may be retained until a selection is made. Verify that the Location gives "veterans preference," if applicable, to applicants.

- Verify that the Location obtains proof of enrollment in school on a full- time or part- time basis from employees on student appointments.

This can be done by requesting a copy of transcripts once or twice per year, or by requesting verification of enrollment through the registrar's office. Note: If a student stops going to school at least on a half-time basis as defined by the institution, the Location should initiate an SF 52 to terminate the appointment. [Reference P&P 413.8, Student & Volunteer Programs.]

- If volunteers are used at the Location, verify they have signed agreements, which are on file and records of service are being maintained. This includes documentation of days and number of hours worked. [Reference P&P 413.8, Student & Volunteer Programs.]
- Verify HRD has approved the content of employment ads (paid and free) for recruitment. [Purchase order files should contain the necessary approvals. Reference PPD Memorandum, Approval of Paid Advertisements, dated June 8, 1995.]

Note: Paid ads must be reviewed by the servicing HR specialist to ensure USDA and ARS are featured prominently as the employer; the correct salary range is listed; the type of appointment is shown, and the EEO/CR statement is included.

- Verify employee paper records are safeguarded in locked file cabinets with restricted access. Records should contain only current documents necessary to the function of the office.

Note: there should be no attempt to duplicate an Official Personnel Folder. No information other than “public information” (i.e., Name, Title, Pay Plan, Series, Grade, Pay Rate and Duty Location) may be released without the employee’s consent. [Reference P&P 158.1, Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act Guidelines and P&P 411.7, Releasing Information About REE Employees.]

- Verify the Location understands when an SF-52 should be prepared, i.e., name changes, position redesignations, reassignment of employees to another management unit, etc. Verify details of employees (those who are detailed to other positions for more than 30 days) are being documented with an SF-52. [Reference HRD Web site, Preparing Requests for Personnel Actions.]

4.02 Time and Attendance (Denise Corbitt, 301-504-1443)

- Verify all employees (with the exception of intermittent who should not have a regular work schedule) have an established tour of duty approved by the supervisor, (example REE-331).
- Verify employees and timekeepers are initialing and that supervisors are signing each T&A, unless determined to be impracticable.
- Verify all credit and/or compensatory time is being recorded on T&A’s. Credit hours are initiated by the employee versus compensatory time, which is ordered/required by the supervisor. Compensatory time cannot be forced on an employee earning less than GS-10, step 10 or if these employees are non-exempt from FLSA. These employees, however, may decide to accept compensatory time in lieu of overtime. If so, the statement on the bottom of time sheet should be initialed by both the employee and the supervisor.
- Verify that credit hours accrued (especially on Saturdays and Sundays) were worked on the employee’s own initiative. If the work was assigned/ordered/directed/etc., by management, the hours worked must be recorded as overtime or compensatory time, not credit hours. See bullet item above.
- Review T&A information for leave used under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and Sick Leave Usage for Family Care, Adoption and Bereavement as follows:
 - FLMA is an entitlement for up to 12 weeks of Leave Without Pay (LWOP) (annual and/or sick leave may be substituted as appropriate) during any 12 month period to care for a family member. LWOP is coded as Transaction Code (TC) 71 for processing and all time must be maintained in a cumulative manual or automated record.
 - Sick Leave for Family Care and Bereavement: Sick leave provision allows employees to use up to 480 hours of sick leave for serious medical conditions (prorated for part time employees) each leave year as long as the employee

maintains a sick leave balance of at least 80 hours for care of a family member or for bereavement. An employee can use up to 40 hours of sick leave for this same purpose without having to maintain a balance of 80 hours. TC 62 (sick leave used) with the prefix 62 Sick Leave for Family Care is used for time and attendance processing. A maximum of 104 hours of family sick leave can be used for non-serious medical situations. The total amount of family sick leave, both serious, and non-serious combined, cannot exceed 480 hours in a leave year. Only 40 hours may be advanced for sick leave for family care.

- Verify in the T&A records for callback overtime work situations. If an employee is called back to work unexpectedly for additional duty later in the workday or on a day that was not originally scheduled as a workday, overtime is credited for a minimum of 2 hours – whether 1 minute or 2 hours is actually worked. After the first 2 hours the individual would earn overtime as it was actually worked. [Reference P&P 402.3, Premium Pay.]
- Check to see if any employees are listed on the NFC TIME 4004 Report, also known as the CULPRT 0152 or Leave Error Report. If so, verify an AD-717, Leave Audit, has been completed to resolve the leave error. **Note:** Leave reconciliation/audits must be conducted when an employee has a discrepancy in leave balances between the NFC database and the STAR database.
- All Leave audits must be prepared from ARS-331's – not from the system printouts. To certify correctness of an audit, the ORIGINAL SIGNATURE of audited employee's supervisor along with DATE is required on all audits (AD-717). The Supervisor's signature on the leave audit certifies correctness of the audit consistent with their personal knowledge. Leave audits should also indicate the name of the audit preparer (normally the timekeeper) and her/his phone number. An accurate leave audit includes explanatory notes as necessary. Leave audits should start with pay period 01 or the first pay period of a new employee; through the last pay period which was paid/separates.
- Verify certified T&A reports and the supporting documentation are being retained for 6 years [Reference NFC Procedures: Title I, Payroll/Personnel Manual, Chapter 7, Time Procedures, Section 1, Time and Attendance Instructions, dated 3/02.]

4.03 Pay and Leave (Denise Corbitt, 301-504-1443)

- Review that employees and supervisors understand the differences between overtime, compensatory time in lieu of paid overtime (work required by management) and credit time (work initiated by the employee) as follows:

Overtime worked and compensatory time in lieu of paid overtime must: Exceed 8 hours in a day or 40 hours in a week; and

- 1) be officially ordered or approved (employees cannot approve their own overtime);
- 2) be actually performed by an employee;
- 3) be documented in writing in the documentation attached to the T&A log;

- Credit hours are hours worked in excess of an employee's basic work requirement, 1) the employee elects to work and the supervisor approves so as to vary the length of the workweek or a workday, 2) used before they are earned, 3) cannot be earned on a holiday during the hours that correspond to the employee's regularly scheduled hours for that day and 4) cannot be earned by intermittent employees. [Reference P&P 402.3, Premium Pay, and P&P 402.1, Flexible Work Schedules.]
- Verify that supervisors/employees understand the administration of leave as follows:
 - administrative leave (which is usually applied uniformly in an organization);
 - advanced sick leave advanced annual leave must be requested with justification.
- Advancing of sick leave for an employee is limited to 240 hours. Note: Employees with NTE dates are eligible for advance annual or sick leave not-to-exceed the amount of annual or sick leave they will earn in the remaining period of employment. (Prorated for PT.) Advancing sick leave is limited to up to 40 hours if used to care for family members.

4.04 Performance Management (Helene Saylor, 301-504-1432, Reference the HRD Web site - topic "Performance Management")

Review a sampling of performance plans and appraisals for the following:

- Verify performance plans are in place and annual ratings of record are being conducted for covered employees,
- Verify employees are covered under the correct rating cycle (i.e. December 31 or March 31),
- Verify that performance plans are current, and accurate and relevant to the position,
- Verify there are three, but not more than 10 elements, of which one must be critical, but not all,
- Verify a separate critical element addressing EEO/CR is included in each supervisor's performance plans. (Positions classified as supervisor usually include the term Supervisory, Supervisor, Manager, Officer, or Administrator in the title.),
- Verify EEO/CR objectives are incorporated in a critical element (typically communications/customer service) in each non-supervisor's performance plan,
- Verify plans include a critical element (not a separate critical element) addressing supervisory responsibility,
- Verify plans include a health and safety element where job related or required by the Area,
- Verify OSQR objectives are addressed in Category 1 and Category 4 scientist plans,

- Verify midyear reviews are conducted and documented,
- Verify performance plans have been in place at least 90 days before an employee has been rated and that annual performance ratings are completed within established time frames (within 90 days of the end of the rating cycle or within time frames prescribed by a labor management agreement) and,
- Verify performance plans and annual appraisals are reviewed and approved by a person at a higher organizational level than that of the rating official.

4.05 Awards (Helene Saylor, 301-504-1432, Reference the HRD Web site - topic "Awards")

By sampling of awards and discussions with Location employees, review for the following:

- Verify the incentive awards program, including Spot and Time-Off awards as well as Non-Monetary awards, is being used at the Location,
- Verify performance awards are being submitted in a timely manner, specifically time to the period of award coverage. (Performance awards should be given within 60-90 days of end of the appraisal period),
- Verify AD-287 forms are signed with two levels of approval. (AD-287 forms must have the signatures of the recommending individual and the approving official),
- Verify awards are approved at a management level higher than that of the recommending individual,
- Verify the ARS delegation of authority for approval of awards or any other Area approval policy is being followed,
- Verify true accomplishments and achievements area being recognized,
- Verify through discussions with the LAO: Is there a pattern in the approval of awards? Are the same employees receiving them all the time? Are only higher graded employees receiving awards? Are there unusual differences in the amounts of the awards among awardees?
- Verify employees, managers, supervisors, and teams/groups are recognized for demonstrating superior equal employment opportunity accomplishments,
- Verify AD-287 forms are being initiated and sent to HRD for Spot Awards. (Ensure that convenience checks are no longer being used for the spot awards payments), and
- Verify written justifications are attached to AD-287 forms for awards over \$500 and for Time-Off Awards over 10 hours.

4.06 Training (Marianne Plumb, 301 504-1470)

- Review a sampling of Individual Development Plans (IDPs), which are required by the Agency. Determine if the IDP is a joint effort on the part of the supervisor and employee

and if it is updated annually. [Reference P&P 440.1, Employee Training and Development.]

- Review the employee orientation procedures followed at the Location. Reference P&P 412.2, Appointment and Orientation of New Employees and the New Employee Orientation Program Guide. Ensure that each orientation package includes:
 1. A copy of "Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch" and "Employee Responsibilities and Conduct"
 2. The USDA Handbook on "Workplace Violence Prevention and Response"
 3. A copy of the publication, "Handling Diversity in the Workplace."
 4. A copy of the publication, "Sexual Harassment"

Note: New researchers and research supervisors should be properly oriented to the Research Position Evaluation System (RPES). Verify they been instructed to bookmark the RPES Home Page (<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/rpes/>) and been shown the 3-part video series.

4.07 Position Description/Management (Tina Voglesong, 301-504-1407)

- Verify supervisors understand their responsibility for assigning work and for certifying to the accuracy of the position description. Do they know whom to call with questions on writing position descriptions, requesting desk audits, and on appeal procedures? [P&P 431.1, Position Management and Position Classification, 10/02/02]
- Verify the Locations are maintaining the official position description copies certified by Headquarters, and all employees have position descriptions that reflect current duties and responsibilities. Verify collateral duty statements contained in position descriptions when appropriate. (Collateral duties should be identified in position descriptions if they are regular and recurring.) [P&P 431.1, Position Management and Position Classification, 10/02/02]

4.08 Employee Relations (Employee Relations, Kathleen Antonelli, 301- 504-1418)
(Ethics, Sue Mutchler, 301 504-1442)

- Verify supervisors, managers and employees understand procedures for addressing conduct and performance issues. Are supervisors aware that the authority to propose and to decide conduct and performance actions has been delegated to the Area?
- Verify the Location follows the USDA Supplemental Standards of Ethical Conduct regarding the prior approval requirement for outside employment or activities for those employees required to file either a public or confidential financial disclosure report (SF-278 or OGE Form 450). Employees seeking to engage in employment/activities for which advance approval is required shall submit form REE-101 to their immediate supervisor and REE Ethics Advisor for approval.

- Verify Ethics Advisor contacts (names and phone numbers) are either posted or readily available to all employees, and are updated at least annually.

4.09 Other

(Exit Clearance Procedures, Bill Duggan, 202-720-7638)
(Occupational Medical Surveillance Program, Ann Lucas, 301-504-1487)

- Determine if there are any problems with retirement/separation procedures. [Reference P&P 426.1, Employee Exit Clearance Procedures, October 22, 1998.] Specifically,
 - (1) Verify AD-581's for lump sum payments are forwarded for processing within 2 weeks of the employee's last day of work;
 - (2) Verify all separating employees are given an SF 8 and a copy of the separating employee's SF 52 is faxed to the Frick Company.
- Determine if the Occupational Medical Surveillance Program (OMSP) is being utilized at the Location? (Employee participation is not required but should be encouraged). Are OMSP results of employee medical examinations being forwarded to the Medical Review Officer (USPHS-DFOH) by the local provider? (P&P 235.0-ARS, ARS Occupational Medical Surveillance Program, April 3, 2002)